



# Wiping The Slate Clean Corinna's New Horizon



*After cleanup: In 2002, the area where Eastland Woolen Mill once stood.*

## Eastland Woolen Mill

**C**orinna, located in central Maine, is home for a population of 2,100. This quintessential "small town, America" has seen a lot of changes over the past several years. When the Eastland Woolen Mill closed in 1996, the Town of Corinna was faced with a significant loss of jobs and tax revenue and no one to address the contaminated Mill structures and the chlorinated benzenes, dieldrin, and other contaminants that had seeped into the soil and river. The town sought assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (ME DEP) to address the contamination left behind by the Mill and to start planning the revitalization of downtown Corinna once the clean up was complete.

To date, the town has seen the removal of the entire former Eastland Woolen Mill, the relocation of Main Street, the restoration of the East Branch of the Sebasticook River, replacement of the Main Street bridge and railroad crossing, and the removal of 115,000 tons of contaminated soils. Every step of the way, EPA, ME DEP, the Town of Corinna, and local stakeholders have worked together to accomplish a cleanup that optimizes the reuse potential for the site. The town has a whole new perspective on the future and a solid foundation for redevelopment.

### Eastland Woolen Mill Site

Until 1996, the Eastland Woolen Mill was the town's largest employer. Some time in the late 1950s or early 1960s, the mill reportedly began using large quantities of a dye aid containing chlorinated benzenes to swell the wool and enhance the dyeing process. All chlorinated benzene compounds are toxic. Exposure to these compounds may effect the liver, kidney, and endocrine systems; 1,4 dichlorobenzene is considered a possible carcinogen.

The disposal practice was to dump the excess wastewater and wool floc, including the chlorinated benzenes, into the floor drains which emptied into the soil beneath the Mill and into the East Branch of the Sebasticook River. In 1983, a ME DEP employee was concerned with the quality of the water at a local restaurant and had the water sampled. Chlorinated benzene compounds were detected at levels that resulted in five water supplies being fitted with carbon filters in 1983, with that number expanding to 10 by 1988. Although the Eastland Woolen Mill worked with the state and town to develop a public drinking water system when it became evident they had rendered much of the drinking water toxic, the mill went bankrupt and closed in 1996, leaving the town with a recessed economy and the majority of Corinna's Main Street highly contaminated.

## JUST THE FACTS:

- Since 1999, EPA has invested more than \$36 million in early cleanup actions.
- To date, the entire former Mill has been removed, Main Street relocated, the East Branch of the Sebasticook River restored, the Main Street bridge and rail road crossing replaced, and 115,000 tons of contaminated soil removed.
- Soil treatment is expected to be completed in 2004.

*"We have a clean sheet of paper to start planning a new village center and this is a unique opportunity... some of us envision a New England village center with retail services, antiques and crafts, home or micro businesses, possible B&Bs and offices for professional services, all overlooking a river/lakeside environment."*

*Resident of Corinna*

## Cleaning up Contamination

Sampling by the ME DEP and EPA identified chlorinated benzene compounds in the soil, groundwater, surface water, and sediment. It also was discovered that contamination had spread to local water supply wells, including a multi-unit retirement community. With such findings, EPA placed the Eastland Woolen Mill on the National Priorities List (NPL) in July 1999. Also in July 1999, EPA began an early cleanup action at the site. Since then, the mill has been completely demolished and EPA has been performing the arduous task of excavating and treating the contaminated soil. As of July 1999, over \$36 million have been committed to the early clean up action. Further investigations have shown contamination from the Mill deep in the bedrock groundwater system and extending several miles downstream of the former Mill complex into the sediments and floodplain soil of the East Branch of the Sebasticook River. Contaminants from the site were also found in the fish living downstream. EPA is poised to sign a cleanup decision in September 2002 to begin the restoration of the contaminated groundwater to ensure safe drinking water in the long term for all affected by the contamination. EPA also plans to release a cleanup plan for the downstream contamination in 2003.

Because Eastland Woolen Mill spanned the entire length of Main Street, the town was faced with the unconventional opportunity of starting over once the cleanup was complete. The Maine Department of Transportation (ME DOT) and Town of Corinna had been targeting a realignment of Maine Street because of the high rate of accidents on this section of road.. To avoid duplication of efforts, EPA worked in tandem with ME DOT and the Town of Corinna to re-route the road. This allowed the Town of Corinna and ME DOT to focus on completing the construction by-pass as the permanent re-alignment. In addition, it was determined that along with re-aligning Main Street, the East Branch of the Sebasticook River needed to be diverted to accomplish the cleanup. Working with the Town and other stakeholders, it was determined that the relocated section of river would become the final alignment. This realignment eliminated the need for maintaining the dam beneath the Eastland Woolen Mill, which allowed the East Branch of the Sebasticook River to run free from Corundel Lake through downtown Corinna.

## EPA and Community Working Together

When the community learned about the proposed reconstruction of Main Street (Route 7), tremendous local interest was sparked. Suddenly Corinna, in need of economic revitalization, began exploring options for beneficial reuse of the former Eastland Woolen Mill property. With the creation of the Corinna New Beginning Committee, comprised of Corinna citizens, business representatives, and town officials, the town's revitalization plan was underway. EPA has worked in conjunction with the community during the entire clean up process and has been sensitive to their needs. For example, EPA provided a Redevelopment Initiative Grant to the community. One resident stated, "We have a clean sheet of paper to start planning a new village center and this is a unique opportunity...some of us envision a New England village center with retail services, antiques and crafts, home or micro businesses, possible B&Bs and offices for professional services, all overlooking a river/lakeside environment."

## CONTACTS:

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Visit the EPA Region web site at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/region1/Superfund>



*Eastland Woolen Mill before  
Superfund clean up began.*

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Corinna's residents have played a very active role in the rehabilitation of the town. Community groups such as the Sebasticook Committee for a Clean Environment (SCCE) were formed and mobilized as a result of the clean up. The SCCE has received a Technical Assistance Grant from EPA to hire independent experts to review EPA's work. The SCCE meets monthly to discuss the site's progress and develops communication strategies to ensure the residents of Corinna are kept informed.

Residents are excited about new opportunities on the horizon for Corinna. One resident stated, "I dare say not another town in the country has the opportunity we have here. What other village can boast not only a new downtown, but a new roadway and river bed location? This is the chance of a lifetime to make Corinna from scratch. If we do this right, some of those agencies, or other groups, with their funds and jobs just may find this a unique place to be!"

Although the soil excavation activities were completed in 2001, the clean up process of the Eastland Woolen Mill site is still underway. During 2002, EPA is working on treating portions of the contaminated soils using a low temperature thermal technology. Restoration of the affected roadway and the river channel is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Soil treatment activities are expected to extend into 2004.